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A N
EXHORTATION
TO THE
Clergy of *ELC*.



A N
EXHORTATION
Sent to the
CLERGY
OF THE
Diocese of *ELY*.

By *Patrick* S T M O N Lord Bishop
of *ELY*.

Before his Fifth Triennial
Visitation, MDCCIV.

L O N D O N:
Printed for *Ri. Chiswell*, at the Rose and
Crown in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, 1704.



*An Exhortation to the
Clergy of E L Y.*

Dear Brethren,

TH E late Terrible
Storm of Wind hath
made such a deep Impres-
sion upon me, that as I
cannot put it out of my
Mind ; so it seems to call
upon me to desire others
to keep in mind such a
Dreadful Instance, as I ac-

A 3 count

2 *An Exhortation to*

count it , of the Divine Displeasure.

It was certainly the Voice of God ; and therefore it concerns us highly to hearken to it , and consider what it spake to us from God. For which Reason I have waved such Exhortations to you, as I have been wont to send before my Visitations ; and shall in This beseech you, and desire you to beseech others, to look upon this Tempest as a Loud Call to a speedy Repentance. Which every

ry

ry one of us ought to Practise our selves, and Preach to our People, with great Earnestness, and pressing Persuasions; lest after so much Damage as we have suffered by this Stormy Wind, in the shattering our Churches and Houses, destroying our Shipping, and so many Seamen and others, a worse thing should come unto us.

I am the more excited to this, by the Remembrance of what I long ago read, when I was a Mem-

4 *An Exhortation to*

ber of the University, in a Learned and Holy Divine of our Church, the Famous Dr. *Jackson*. A little Volume of whose Sermons, which I still have by me, I met withal, Printed at *Oxford* in the Year 1637, (entituled, *Signs of the Times, or God's Forewarnings*) Preached partly before His Majesty, and partly at *Newcastle upon Tyne*; and may now be found in the *Second Volume* of his Works, p. 351.

In

In an *Appendix* to the last of which Sermons, he having mentioned a Treatise of his concerning *Ominous Presagements*, or Abodings good or bad, (which was never published) he hath these memorable Words :

Among all the Forewarnings given to this Land, as so many Summons to Repentance, none which have been given in my Memory, did make so durable an Impression upon my Heart and Thoughts, as that late mighty Wind ; which having begun his Terrible Visi-

6 *An Exhortation to*
tation from the utmost Point
of the South-west, did con-
tinue it in one Night unto the
North-east Corner of this
Southern Province. A Wind,
as he describes it, much
like that which lately raged,
and blew from the same
Point of the *South-west*,
and in the same Month of
November; though not on
the same Day. For as that
continued something long-
er, (one whole Night, as
I understand him) so it fell
out on the Eve of the *Fifth*
of *November*, 1636. as ours
did

did on the *Twenty-sixth*, about *Eleven-a-Clock* at Night.

Now the very Time, as he thought, of that Visitation, was more than a Sign of the Time. *Tempus ipsum admonebat.* The very Time it self wherein it hapned, being the Vigils of that great Anniversary, *November V.* was a sign to his Apprehension most significant; and did interpret (I transcribe his own Words) the Meaning of this Terrible Messenger's In-

Inarticulate Voice, as well as any Prophet (if there had been any then alive) could have done.

And thus much of its Meaning, a serious Reader he thought might understand ; *That albeit we of these Kingdoms were in firm League with all the Nations of the Earth, with whom we have any Commerce ; although our greatest Enemies should become our greatest Friends ; yet it is still in the Lord Almighty his Power , and we may fear in his Purpose , to plague this*
King-

Kingdom, by his own immediate Hand, &c. to bury more living Souls, as well of Superior as of Inferior Rank, in the Ruins of their Stately Houses, or meaner Cottages, than the Powder-Plotters did intend to do, or the Powder-Plot it self, had it taken effect, could have done.

This was the Admonition which he thought was given to this Kingdom at that time, by that Invisible, but most Audible Messenger (as he calls it.) Which I do not find that any one hath

Inarticulate Voice, as well as any Prophet (if there had been any then alive) could have done.

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This was the Admonition which he thought was given to this Kingdom at that time, by that Invisible, but most Audible Messenger (as he calls it.) Which I do not find that any one hath

hath taken notice of, upon occasion of the like Stormy Wind in *November* last; though it seems to me most worthy of great Consideration. For herein he was a kind of a Prophet; this being written but a Year before the Tumults in *Scotland* began; which were followed by those Commotions both in this Kingdom and that, which shook the very Foundations of our Government, and overturned it; by Dethroning and Murdering our King, degrading

grading the Nobility, and enslaving the People to the Will of unreasonable Men; in one word, confounding all things both in Church and State.

I dare not take upon me to interpret the Language of the late Storm, so plainly as he did of that: For I am far from pretending to such a Divine Spirit, as seems to me to have been in that Holy Man: But I may declare my fear, that it bodes some further Calamities; if we do not amend
our

12 *An Exhortation to*

our Lives, which bid an open Defiance to all God's Laws. And I may be allowed, nay, it is my Duty to Pray as he did upon that Occasion: God grant, saith he, every Member of this Church and Kingdom, Grace to look into his own Heart and Purposes; and to all in Authority, whether Superior or Inferior, from the highest to the lowest, to look not only unto their own, but unto others ways, of whom they have the Care or Oversight; that these may run parallel with the ways
of

of God. Which if we shall continue to cross, or fall foul upon them, or his most sacred Laws, it is not any Parliamentary Law, or any Act of State, or Decrees of Courts of Justice, that can break the stroke of his out-stretched, punishing Arm and Hand; and fend off his dreadful Judgments threatened, from falling more heavy upon us, than at any time hitherto (praised be his Name) they have done.

These solemn Reflections of his, upon the Voice of that Messenger of God
(as

14 *An Exhortation to*

(as he styles it) have awakened me to consider, That I having the *Care and Oversight* of you, my Dear Brethren, ought, upon the like Occasion, to represent to you, that you are highly concerned in this matter: Being called by God to a *weighty Office and Charge*; that is, (as you were told at your Ordination) to be *Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord*; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's Family. And therefore, I
be-

beseech you, look to the ways of your Parishioners ; observe those who are negligent, or deviate from the ways of God ; and admonish them of their Duty ; exhort them to Repentance ; giving them both *publick* and *private Monitions* (as you then promised to do) *with all faithful diligence.*

I shall mention some few things , wherein I desire your *Diligence*. If you observe any Persons to neglect the Publick Service of God on the Lord's Day, either
loy-

loytering at Home carelessly, or prophanely frequenting Ill Houses; have a great Compassion upon these Men, and endeavour to awaken them out of their Stupidity: For if they be not Atheists, they are in the direct way to that horrid Impiety.

There are other solemn Times also appointed by Authority for Humiliation, to deprecate God's Displeasure, and avert his Judgments, which ought to be diligently attended. And
though

though they are not continued Monthly, as they have sometimes been, yet no Authority (as that Great Man before-mention'd speaks upon occasion of the Storm in his days) prohibits any
' private Man to fast upon
' the Days appointed by
' the Church. Whose Canons enjoin, though not
' whole Families, yet of every Family some one or
' other, to resort unto the
' House of God, to offer up
' Prayers and Supplications
' appointed by our Church,
' upon

18 *An Exhortation to*

‘ upon two other * special
‘ Days in the Week, besides
‘ the Lord’s Day.

I know how hard it is to persuade Men to come and supplicate the Divine Mercy upon those we call *Litany Days* : though it is a very easy Injunction, for some one out of every Family, to implore a Blessing upon the rest. Yet try, I beseech you, what you can do, to bring your People unto this, by representing to them the great Benefit of it. The late Dreadful Tempest,
which

which put us all into a great Consternation, fell out, I observe, on a *Friday Night*. Now I cannot but think it was a great Comfort to every good Man, in the midst of that Fright, if he reflected that he, or some of his, had been at Church that Day, and commended his Family to God; beseeching him, as we pray in the *Litany*, to deliver us from *Lightning and Tempest*, as well as other Calamities there mentioned.

And

And further represent to them, that they who never pray to God from one Lord's-Day to another, but remain the whole Week without the Worship of God, are in very great danger of falling into such Forgetfulness of God, as is a large Step to Atheism. Therefore exhort them to have so much Care of their Souls, as at least to pray to God every Morning and Evening, in their own Family; begging his Blessing upon them in their several
Cal-

Callings; and rendring their humble Thanks to him for his Mercies. You can easily make such a Prayer for them, and beseech them to use it; which would be a good step towards the making them Religious: But without this, very good Men have look'd upon it as a sign of Irreligion.

I lately met with these Words of a very Eminent Person, which I cannot well forbear to set down here; *Constant Family Worship is so Necessary to keep*

B *alive*

22 *An Exhortation to*

alive a constant Sense of God and Religion in the minds of Men, that I do not see how any Family that neglects it, can be esteemed a Family of Christians, or indeed to have any Religion at all : Inso-much, that another late Writer quoting these Words, takes the confidence to say, A Prayerless Family is a Pagan Family.

But I will say no more of this, but only one word, That the late Storm seems to call us to this Duty; that we should not content

our

our selves only on *Sundays* to beseech God, as we do in the Evening Service, *To defend us from the perils and dangers of that Night*; but every Night before we go to Rest, commend our selves to His Gracious Protection; for we know not, when we lye down, whether we shall rise again; but our Beds before the Morning may become our Graves.

It is incumbent also upon you, being the Lord's Watchmen, to observe

24 *An Exhortation to*

what Sins are most reigning in your Parish ; whether Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Swearing , Prophaning of the Lord's-Day , or any other ; and endeavour to Convince them of these Sins, and to bring them to Repentance ; exhorting all those who have any Power in their hands, to employ it with their utmost Vigor, for the suppressing of these Vices.

But I must more particularly admonish you of one thing, which you promised
at

at your Ordination ; That you would maintain and set forward, as much as in you lieth, *Quietness*, *Peace* and *Love*, among all Christian People, especially among those committed to your Charge.

Now there was never greater need of your laborious Endeavours in this Business, than at this time ; if we may judge of all Places, by what we see in some ; where there are such Discords and Divisions, such Heats and Animosities, such Hatreds and Enmities, nay

such Study of Revenge, as, if they be not Extinguished, are sad Presages of an approaching Ruin. I cannot but think that the late Terrible Storm, which did so much Mischief by Land and by Sea, was a Warning to us; calling upon us to cease the violent Storms of Contention that are among us, which endanger the Shipwrecking of the whole Kingdom.

Her most Excellent Majesty lately recommended this to the whole Body of
the

the Nation assembled in Parliament by their Representatives, which She did in an extraordinary Vehemence of Stile; telling us, That She *wanted Words* to Express Her earnest Desire of seeing all Her Subjects in perfect Peace and Union among themselves; and therefore desires us all carefully to avoid any Heats or Divisions that may disappoint Her of that Satisfaction, and give Encouragement to the common Enemies of our Church and State. But alas! our Dis-

ferences and Quarrels still continue; and we are in nothing so Zealous, as in our fierce Oppositions one to another.

It is sad to consider the lamentable Effects of this, which already appears in the most unaccountable Disaffection Men bear to one another, in the Writings and Reproaches that are cast on those who have been and are the great Supporters of Religion among us. What a strange Liberty do Men tolerate in themselves,

selves, who represent these Persons as the Betrayers of the Church, meerly because they do not agree with them in some Notions; that is, do not take those things to be for the Service of the Church, which they judge very Necessary? May not Men differ in such things, and not fall out one with another? What Reason can be given for such a License as Men take to Censure their Superiors in this manner, who have all their Lives, in all times, in all

dangers, closely adhered to the Interest of the Church, and taken a great deal of Pains in their Pious Labours to promote it? Might not a little Modesty teach Men to think, that they who are Above, see a little more than they who are Below? If this Virtue were not very scarce, men would not be so fierce and forward to Censure and Judge, without Restraint, their *Elders*, who are men of longer Observation and Experience than themselves.

May

May we not think that
God sent this rough Mes-
senger (I mean the late
Furious Tempest) to re-
prove the violent, boiste-
rous Spirit which rages a-
mong us, and teach us
more Moderation, Gentle-
ness, and Goodness ?
Which that we may learn,
Her Majesty hath been
pleased most Piously once
more to recommend it un-
to us, in the Conclusion of
the Session of Parliament
Yesterday: When She told
us, “ That though Her
“ De-

“ Desires which She had ex-
“ pressed in the beginning
“ of it , of seeing us in
“ perfect Unity, had not
“ met with all the Success
“ which She Wish’d and
“ Expected; yet being ful-
“ ly convinced that nothing
“ is so necessary to our
“ common Welfare ; She
“ is not discouraged from
“ persisting in the same ear-
“ nest Desires, That all
“ will go down into their
“ several Countries, so dis-
“ posed to Moderation and
“ Unity, as becomes those
“ who

“ *who are joyned together in*
“ *the same Religion and In-*
“ *terest.*

By this we cannot but see,
that as She said at first, Her
Royal Heart is set on this :
And let ours be so too ; let
nothing discourage us from
the Blessed Work of Peace-
makers ; remembering that
whatsoever Character Men
give us, our Lord hath
Pronounced such to be the
Children of God.

All these things are very
plain, and have been often
said, but without their de-
fired

34 *An Exhortation to*

fired Effect ; the Reason of which, it is worth our Pains to search into. For which Cause I have annexed to this short Exhortation, a Sermon I preached a little after the late amazing Storm, in my own Chapel ; wherein I endeavoured to show how it comes to pass, that so many Judgments as have befallen us, have not amended us. There are too many, I have there observed, that mind not the Hand of God in them, but impute all such things

things to Natural Causes, tho' they know not what.

This Temper of Mind renders Men hopeless, unless they be awaken'd before they are settled in it, to have a greater Regard to *the Works of the Lord, and the Operations of His Hands.* For they that are not moved by such Astonishing Judgments as the late Storm, to think of God, are more stupid and dull than the unreasonable Creatures, such as the Birds of the Air; with which *Jeremiah* upbraids

36 *An Exhortation to*

braids the *Israelites*, in not discerning, or not observing, those Signs of the Time, which foreshewed God's Judgments coming upon them; with the Causes that Provoked them, 8. *Jerem.* 6, 7. *I hearkned and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her-appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow*

low observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the L O R D.

*Upon which Words that great Man before-mention-
ed, Dr. Jackson, thus discour-
ses; and it deserves our seri-
ous Attention and Confide-
ration. This Stupidity or Sense-
lessness in man, whether Jew or
Gentile, whether Christian or
Heathen, in thus slighting or
neglecting the Signs of the Time,
that is, such Portendments or
Prognosticks of Gods Judgments
or Calamities, as the very Book of
nature, or of the visible Creatures
affords;*

38 *An Exhortation to*

affords ; argues the Nature, at least the Disposition of Men in whom this Stupidity is found, to be farther out of Frame, than the Nature of the Birds of the Air, or Beasts of the Field ; for they commonly foresee unseasonable Weather, or Storm coming, and seek in time for some shelter or refuge : But so do not Men for the most part return to God, who is their only refuge, under the shadow of whose Wings there is only hope of Safety ; albeit He daily gives them more pregnant Prognosticks

sticks of Wrath ensuing, than the disposition of the Air doth unto Birds or Fowls.

I hope what I have said, and what follows in the ensuing Discourse, may have such an effect on those that seriously consider it, as to preserve them from such a senseless Temper of Mind; which if it should generally prevail, I know not what will become of us; but shall be apt to say with David, *My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments.*

April 4. 1704.

XVI.

XVI. *Rev. 9. Latter Part.*

*And they repented not, to give
him Glory.*

WHen we see brute
Creatures so Sen-
sible, as to beware of those
things whereby they have
lately sorely Suffered ; it
may justly raise our Won-
der, that Mankind should
be so Stupid, as when they
have done very Foolishly,
and

and thereby Ruined themselves, not to alter their Course, and by Repenting of their Folly *give Glory* to God, and take Shame to themselves.

It is something strange, that any Man who owns a God, should adventure to Affront His Authority, by opposing himself to His declared Will : But not to Repent of the Fault when he hath committed it, is far more unaccountable : But it is little less than astonishing, that after Men
have

42 *An Exhortation to*

have smarted soundly for it (which was the Case of the Men here spoken of) and been severely Corrected many ways , and a long time, upon that Account, it should not lead them to Repentance.

What! not Repent after God had not only sent His Son to call them to it ; and His Son had sent the Holy Ghost to give them the Grace of Repentance ; and He had denounced terrible Threatnings if they resisted this Grace, which is represented

sented in the Second Chapter of this Book, by a *Sword*, nay a *Two-edged Sword* going out of his mouth against all Contumacious Sinners: But when He had began also a great while ago, to take this Sword into His Hand, to fulfil His Threatnings, and to do Execution; nay, when He had made great Slaughter, and His Sword was become Drunk with the Blood of the Slain: What an Obstinacy was this? How hard and rough were these Men's Hearts? With
what

44 *An Exhortation to*

what a mad Resolution were they possessed, that nothing would satisfy them but to be utterly Undone?

Was there ever any such Men in the World before? Or are there any now so Inconsiderate, who so little understand their own Interest, that they can be moved neither by Words nor by Blows, to cease their Folly, and turn to God? O that we could say there are none now who tread in the steps of these desperate Sinners! That it were as certain

tain the men in my Text had no Successors in their Impiety, as it is certain they did but follow some Ancient Precedents, who had led them the way to Destruction.

You may read in the 4th of *Amos*, a most sad Complaint which God made by that Prophet, of His People *Israel*, that tho' He had sent one Judgment after another upon them, yet they returned not unto Him. *I have given you want of bread in all your places,*

C

ces,

46 *An Exhortation to*

ces, yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the LORD: I have withholden the rain from you, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD: I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. And so He proceeds to mention other Judgments; five times repeating this as the Burden of his Complaint, Yet have ye not returned unto me. Read at your leisure from v. 6. to v. 12. of that Chapter.

Now

Now the very same Obstinacy which possessed those obdurate *Israelites*, was found here again in the Hearts of these Apostate Christians; who after *four Vials* of the Wrath of God had been poured out upon them, yet *repented not*, to give him *Glory*: Nay, after a Fifth Shower of Divine Vengeance was fallen upon their Heads, yet it is said again, *v. 11.* That they only *blasphemed the God of heaven*, because of their Pains and their Sores,

and repented not of their deeds.

I wish I could here make a full stop, and proceed no further in this sad History of an unrelenting Spirit : That I could say there have been none besides these, so obstinately bent upon their own Ruin, as not to Repent of their Deeds, after God hath sent many terrible Judgments upon them, one on the neck of another, to awaken them to it.

But hath there not been more than a spice of this Disease among us, in this Nation ;

Nation ; who after Twenty Years of Tumult and Confusion , of War and Bloodshed (wherein we lost a most Religious King, with our Ancient Government in Church and State) *did not repent, to give glory unto God ?* No, nor after a devouring Pestilence, which soon followed the Happy Restoration ; nor after a no less devouring Fire ; nor after the Plague of Popery, which began to break out among us, till God mercifully stopt its Progress by

50 *An Exhortation to*

our late Wonderful Deliverance. Yet we cannot say that these and other Judgments (which I forbear to mention) have wrought any great Alteration in us ; but the same Spirit still possesses us, of Impiety towards God, and Hatred one towards another.

It will well become every Minister of the Gospel, to enquire and find out the Cause of such Impenitence ; that no Perswasions , no Threatnings, no, nor Judgments, nor the most dreadful Executions (of which
St.

St. *John* here speaks) can move those that feel them, and groan under the Burden of them, to Repent of their evil Deeds. And that shall be my Business in the following Discourse; to the end, that by finding out the Causes, we may be directed how to remove the Effects.

Now this stubborn Impenitence may be ascribed to such Causes as these :

I.

First, Some Sinners are apt to impute all the Calamities that fall upon them,

and others, to bring them to Repentance, unto mere Chance, and blind Fortune : Their Thoughts are so slight, that they think nothing else is concerned in them. When noisome and grievous Diseases sweep Multitudes away (as it was the Case mentioned in the *Second Verse* of this Chapter); when the Fruits of the Earth are Blasted ; when such a furious Tempest rages, as lately did so much Damage both at Land and Sea, they call it an Accident,

dent, and never mind the Hand of God therein.

Now how should they Repent, and return to him, when they do not know who it is that smites them? When *God is not in all their thoughts* (as the *Psalmist* speaks), What hope is there that they should humble themselves, and submit to his Corrections?

This, it is certain, was the Cause of their Ruin whom *Amos* speaks of; whose Condition was parallel to theirs in my Text; as may

54 *An Exhortation to*

be gathered from the *Third Chapter* of his Prophecy, *v. 6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the City, and the People not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?* As much as if he had said, Do not People use to rise and run to their Arms, when they hear the Trumpet sound? Yes sure, though they be in their warm Beds, and heavy with Sleep; unless they think it a false Alarm, and imagine that some Idle Person doth but play the wan-
ton

ton with them. And is there not the same reason, that you should be Rouzed by the Calamities that befall you? Why should not you be stirred up thereby to look about you, and endeavour to prevent the Danger which threatens you? unless you think that there is nothing in all these Calamities, but a concurrence of Accidents, which fortuitously (*i. e.* by Chance) meet together to disturb and disquiet you. But know, that *there is no evil in your city,*

56 *An Exhortation to*

ty, but the L O R D hath a hand in it. Be not so fortifish as to fancy, that He doth not interest Himself in all that befalls you. Look upon them as Divine Admonitions; as Warning-Pieces shot from Heaven, to awaken your drowzy Souls to Repent, and keep off further Danger.

Thus the Prophet Micah speaks to the People of Judah, as Amos had done unto those of Israel, 6. Micah 9. The L O R D's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wis-

*wisdom shall see thy name ;
hear ye the rod, and who hath
appointed it. It is the LORD
of Heaven and Earth that
calls aloud to you by these
Judgments ; and if there be
any man among you that
hath not lost his Reason
and Discretion, he will see
God's Name, that is, His
Power, Justice, and Truth,
in these things, whereby He
rebukes men for their Ini-
quity : Therefore hearken
to the voice of the rod ; mind
and consider what it saith,
and think that God Himself
speaks.*

58 *An Exhortation to*

speaks to you by its Mouth.

And what doth the Rod of God say, when at any time you feel its strokes?

The Prophet there tells us, in the very next Words;

Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? v. 10.

And so he goes on to relate what Violence was in their hands, what Fraud in their dealings, how they spake Lies, and their Tongues were deceitful in their Mouths; that is, the Rod
of

of God accused them of those Sins, which then reigned most among them; and called upon them to Repent of them. And as it concerned them very highly in those days, so it doth us now in such Cases, to show our selves *Men of Wisdom*; and not to be so Foolish, as to impute all the Evil that befalls us, to mere Chance; lest the Divine Vengeance proceed to such an Extremity as there follows, v. 13. *Therefore will I make thee sick in smiting thee,*

60 *An Exhortation to
thee, in making thee desolate
because of thy sins.*

That's the usual Effect of
Atheism and Irreligion ,
when Men will not be cu-
red of it, that they be ex-
tirpated and rooted out of
the Earth, and their Coun-
try be laid desolate: It not be-
ing fit that they should live,
who will not acknowledge
the God of their Life.

This is one great Cause
why there is no Amend-
ment, no, not by the Seve-
rest Judgments. Men are
void of a Sense of God ,
which

which is the beginning of
all Religion and Goodness.

II.

Another Cause why
Men do not Repent when
they are Punished so severely
for their Sins, as the men
whom *St. John* here speaks of,
were ; is this, That many
who have some Sense of
God, have such a good
Opinion of themselves,
that they look upon these
Punishments that are In-
flicted on a Nation, as the
desert of other men's Sins,
and not of their own.

There

There are those who acknowledge the Hand of God in all common Calamities, who yet imagine they see that Hand stretched out against another sort of Men, and not against themselves.

There is scarce any Country or Place, but it is divided into several Parties and Factions: All great Cities are Inhabited by Men of different Opinions and Perswasions, in something or other; and each think the way wherein the
other

other is, to be Absurd and Dangerous. Now when any Mischief befalls that Place, every Party is wont to impute it to the others Fault ; and though they all Suffer in it , throw the Guilt off from themselves, and lay it upon other Men's Backs. Every one is forward and glad to absolve himself , and transfers the Deserts of his own Sins to another man's Crimes.

Now this Humour,
when it prevails (and it is
com-

64 *An Exhortation to*

commonly one of the lamentable Effects of all Divisions) unavoidably hinders Men's return to God. For whilst all cast the blame from off themselves, they must needs continue as they were before : While every one thinks another bad , there is nobody grows Better : When they expect their Neighbours should Amend, they do not amend themselves. It is you that have drawn this Ruin upon us, says one Sort of Men ; Nay, it is You, replies the other :
And

And so, while they toss the Guilt (as I may speak) from one side to the other, it remains among them all.

If you would not have your Hearts hardned in Sin, every Man must suspect himself, and endeavour to find out his own Iniquity. He must not entertain such an Opinion of his own Innocence, and other Men's Lewdness, as to imagine the Guilt is not divided between them. But as the Prophet *Zachary* saith, Every Family or Tribe a-
part

part should be forced to Bewail and Mourn for their Afflictions (12. 11. &c.) So truly we ought to do for our Sins : Every Man, every Family, of whatsoever Perswasion they be, ought to ask themselves , What have we done ? For more or less, all have Offended God.

Till there be this Sobriety, this Humility, this Holy Jealousy over our selves; this Impartiality and upright Judgment, there is no hope Men should be brought

brought to Repentance ; but every one will rush forward in his Evil Courses, like the Horse into the Battel ; fearing no Danger, and seeing no Fault at all, that should make him distrust himself in the Course wherein he is engaged.

III.

I may add unto this, as being nearly linked to it, that the Hatred which men of different Perswasions usually bear to each other, is another Cause they do not Return to God. Because
they

they are vehemently bent in other Designs against Men. They are so full of Thoughts how to make a strong Opposition to them, that they consider nothing else; no, not the common Ruin that is likely to come upon them all. Their Hearts are so entirely possessed with earnest desires to Supplant each other, that there is no room for other Thoughts; especially when they imagine, that by such Contrivances they are doing God good Service. This
blinds

blinds their Eyes, so that they can see no Fault in themselves, nor no Good in others: Nay, this mutual Hatred which they have conceived, makes them oft-times look upon the Evils which befall them, as coming from Men, and not from God; and so they are tempted to seek rather to be Revenged of them, than to be Reconciled to Him.

Thus, it is likely, it was with *Samaria*, against whom *Amos* Prophefied; who

D

Wor-

Worshipped God upon another Mountain, different from that at *Jerusalem*; nay, opposite unto it: and so all their Care was to keep at as great a distance as they could from *Judah*; though they still remained at a wider distance from God. The very thing, I fear, that hath undone many in these days, who have no greater Concern, than to destroy those that are Opposite to them. Their Hearts are so fraught with a bitter Zeal this way, that they

the Clergy of Ely. 71

they have no regard to any thing else. Their Sins lye quiet and safe, and are not at all opposed; while they are furiously engaged in these Enmities: Nay, all God's Judgments, which are intended to allay these Heats, serve only to inflame their Spirits in these Inveterate Hatreds.

For they imagine, as I said, those whom they oppose, to be the Causes or the Instruments of all those Evils that befall them; and so they employ their

D 2 Thoughts,

Thoughts , and their Desires , and their Tongues too against them, and not against the true Cause of all their Sins and Iniquities, which escape without any Censure. Their Minds are quite drawn from the Consideration how they Provoke God, by the continual Provocation they receive one from another. They cannot return to Him, because they have turned all their Thoughts and Cares another way, from whence they will not be diverted.

So

So dangerous a thing it is, to have our Hearts fraught with Hatred, as they too commonly are, when Men are engaged in opposite Factions: Which is not only very Wicked in it self, being directly contrary to the Christian Spirit, the very Bane of Religion, nay, and of Human Society; but (besides other mischievous Consequences) it obstructs Men's Repentance, and hardens them in their Sins; which are not Observed, or not Cor-

rected, while they are violently bent to Prosecue other Men, whom they think more Faulty than themselves.

Of this Disease therefore we must seek a Cure, by such serious Thoughts as these : That nothing is so Odious, as Sin and Wickedness ; and above all other Sins, this of Hatred and Malignity, bitter Strife and Debate, especially upon the score of Religion ; and these, or any other Sins are least to be endured in
our

our selves, if we be guilty of them: And if we are Guilty of them, but do not see them, or are not Sensible of them, we are unfit Judges of the Faults of other Men. But if Men do see them, and will not in the first study to Amend themselves, how can they reasonably hope that others should Amend their Faults? Or with what Face can they accuse their Neighbours, when they lie under the same Guilt which they charge on them? And

76 *An Exhortation to*

have not such Power over others, as they have over their own Hearts and Ways; and therefore must begin to Reform at home. Which if we would do, we have this comfortable Assurance from the Wise Man, *That when a man's ways please the Lord, he will make even his enemies to be at peace with him,* 16. Prov. 7.

In the Verse before which Words, there is this Remark made by the same Wise Man, *That by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.*

evil. From whence I might
take occasion to observe,
That on the contrary, Men
do not depart from Evil;
because instead of cherish-
ing an Holy Fear in their
Hearts, they sooth them-
selves up with vain Hopes.
This I might alledge as
another Cause that Men do
not Repent, even when
they feel the Hand of God
Scourging them for their
Sins: They flatter them-
selves very easily, with a
belief of better Times,
though they do not grow

78 *An Exhortation to*

better themselves. When a Judgment is removed, they hope the like will not return again. And the more Merciful God is, in not letting it lie long (which by the way hath been our own Case,) the more Confident Men grow that they are out of all Danger. But if I should enlarge on this, I should not leave room for that which I take to be more Material.

IV.

The next thing therefore

fore, to which , I think ,
Men's Impenitence may
be justly ascribed ; is, That
they are apt to think God's
Mind may be altered and
turned towards them by
some means or other, tho'
they do not turn to Him.
They may Appease Him
they fancy, and keep off
utter Desolation , without
a thorough Reformation.
Their Solemn Prayers, for
instance, and Supplications,
especially if joined with
Fasting, and sorrowful Hu-
miliation of themselves ,
will

80 *An Exhortation to*

will move Him, they think, to lay aside His Anger, though it be ever so great.

And indeed these are such prevalent Things, that I wish Men were generally more Serious, and frequent in the Practice of them: For they suppose we are sensible of our Sin, and of our Danger: And consequently that we are willing to do any thing to obtain a Pardon for the one, and a Removal of the other. They that are truly Humbled, are ready to sub-

submit to any terms, and consent to every thing that is proposed to them. But if we rest here, and go no further ; if we have only some good Desires, Inclinations , and Purposes ; and then fall into this Opinion, That God may be importuned hereby to be Merciful to us, without any further care to procure His Favour ; this is such a Conceit, that where it prevails, there is no reason to expect a change of Men's Life and Manners.

This

This was it undid the *Jews*, and brought them to utter Ruin. For when their Country was already Desolate, when their Cities were burnt with Fire (as we read in 1. *Isaiah* 7.) then they thought to appease the Divine Majesty with a Multitude of Sacrifices ; with the Fat of fed Beasts ; with their Oblations and Incense ; their new Moons, and Solemn Assemblies : Though they did not put away the Evil of their Doings from before

fore His Eyes; as we read there, v. 11, 12, 13. and those that follow. Where he protests that all these things were an Abomination; that He loathed and abhorred those Services, though of His Own Institution; that He was weary to bear them; that they rather more Provoked than Atoned Him by these Means.

And therefore He threatens to *hide his eyes from them when they spread forth their hands to him; yea, when they*
made

84 An Exhortation to

made many prayers, he would not hear them: The Reason follows, v. 15. Your hands are full of blood. They did not lift up pure hands unto Him (as the Apostle Exhorts,) and therefore, to put them in the right way, he calls upon them, v. 16, 17. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead the cause of the widow. And then

then adds, *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* As much as to say, Now the Business is done, now we are Agreed, but not till now. This is the thing that will turn away my Wrath: not Prayers alone, though ever so Earnest; not Sacrifices, though ever so Rich; not Solemn Days for Divine Service, though strictly Ob-

86 *An Exhortation to*

Observed ; which are only the Means, not the End ; and therefore we must not rest in them, till they bring us to that for which they are designed, the making us truly better. Which we shall never be, till we settle this belief in our Mind, That it is impossible to prevail with God to cease his Anger, till we cease to do evil, and learn to do well ; that is, till we cease to provoke him to Anger.

This is the Doctrine of
that

that Prophet; and the very same the Prophet *Amos* preached to the *Israelites*, which he did ~~to the Jews~~, v. 21, 22, &c. I hate and despise your feast-days, and I will not smell (or relish) your holy assemblies; though you offer me burnt offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of thy songs, or Hymns, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment come down as waters, and righteousness

88 *An Exhortation to*

ness as a mighty stream.

Till we learn such Lessons as this, and not trust merely to our Prayers and Solemn Days, we are in a ready way to Destruction: Because these we would have God to accept, instead of Repentance and Amendment of Life; when without this, he declares, He is so far from Accepting the other, that he will have no regard to them; nay, despises and hates them.

There is a Solemn time now approaching (which
we

we call *LENT*) of Fasting and Humiliation; in which many of us, I hope, will make a Conscience of performing some of the Duties belonging to it; that is, Spend some time more than ordinary in Prayer, in Reading, in calling our selves to an Account, and reflecting on our former Life: Using likewise some kind of Abstinence, if not Fasting, as we find it most Profitable. But let us not, I beseech you, content our selves with

90 *An Exhortation to*

with the bare External Performance of these things; which will very much increase our Guilt, if they breed in us such a mean Opinion of God, that we imagine, He can be pleased with these outward Exercises alone; though there follow no inward change of our Hearts, nor any Reformation of Life; which He expects should be wrought by such means; because for that end they were Ordained. Fasting, for instance, is an excellent
Re-

Remedy for many Sins; but then it must cure them, or else it is good for little.

Shall I desire you to hear part of a Discourse of *St. Chrysostom* upon this Subject, in his Third Sermon to the People of *Antioch*. He that defines
' Fasting, by mere Absti-
' nence from Food, he it is
' that dishonours Fasting.
' For it is not mere Ab-
' stinence from Food, but
' departing from Evil. Dost
' thou Fast? Show it by
' thy Works. If thou
' askest, what Works? I an-
' swer,

92 *An Exhortation to*

‘ swer, If thou seest a poor
‘ Man, Relieve him ; if
‘ thou meetest an Enemy,
‘ be Reconciled to him ; if
‘ thou seest a Neighbour in
‘ greater Prosperity than
‘ thy self, do not Envy him.
‘ Let not thy Stomach on-
‘ ly Fast, but thy Eyes,
‘ thy Ears, thy Feet, thy
‘ Hands , and all the rest
‘ of the Members of thy
‘ Body. Let thy Hands
‘ abstain from Extortion,
‘ Rapine , Covetousness ,
‘ and Violence ; Let thy
‘ Feet keep a Fast, by stop-
‘ ping

‘ping their Course to un-
‘lawful Spectacles. Let
‘thy Eyes abstain from
‘wanton Glances. Let thy
‘Ears keep a Fast, by not
‘listening to Detraction,
‘Calumnies, Accusations,
‘but turning away from
‘those that Whisper them.
‘Let the Mouth also Fast,
‘from filthy Communica-
‘tion, from Reproaches,
‘from Reviling, from Rail-
‘ing, Evil Speaking, Ly-
‘ing and Slandering.

‘For what good doth it
‘to abstain from eating
E ‘Flesh

94 *An Exhortation to*

‘ Flesh, or from Fish ei-
‘ ther, if we bite and de-
‘ vour one another? Now
‘ he that Detracts, he that
‘ Backbites another, he eats
‘ his Brothers Flesh, he
‘ bites his Neighbour. From
‘ which St. Paul terrifies us,
‘ when he saith, 5. *Galat.*
‘ 15. *If ye bite and devour*
‘ *one another, take heed that*
‘ *ye be not consumed one of*
‘ *another.* Thou hast not
‘ fastned thy Teeth in a bit
‘ of Flesh all this *Lent*; but
‘ thou hast fastned a false
‘ Accusation, an evil Sur-
‘ mise,

the Clergy of Ely. 95

‘ mise, an unjust Suspicion,
‘ an ungrounded Jealousy,
‘ in the Soul of another;
‘ whereby thou hast woun-
‘ ded that Soul, and those
‘ whom thou hast falsely
‘ Accused, and affected thy
‘ self with innumerable
‘ Evils. Which he there
‘ reckons up, but I shall
‘ not mention; because it
‘ is time to tell you how he
‘ concludes in these Words:

‘ Though we should eat
‘ Ashes, such Severity will
‘ do us no Service; unless
‘ we abstain from Detractions.

96 *An Exhortation to*

‘ on. For not those things
 ‘ that enter into the Mouth
 ‘ defile the Man , but those
 ‘ things that proceed out of
 ‘ the mouth, come forth from
 ‘ the heart, and they defile the
 ‘ man. For out of the heart
 ‘ proceed evil thoughts (i. e.
 ‘ Designs) murder, adulte-
 ‘ ry, fornication, theft, false-
 ‘ witness, blasphemies. These
 ‘ are the things which defile
 ‘ the man, 15. Matt. 18, &c.
 And then he beseeches them,
 not to think it enough that
 they have been Serious for
 a few Days, but to look
 upon

upon themselves as bound to Reform their Life, if they expected to be Happy. For as they who are very Sick, unless they alter their way of living, will receive no Benefit by the strictness of their Diet for a little time: So unless Sinners, saith he, will be always sober, two or three days of Fasting will do them no good.

V.

And so I proceed to the last thing I shall mention, as the Cause of Men's not

E 3

Re-

Repenting; no, not though they be loudly awakened to it by Terrible Judgments; Which is the flightiness of their Thoughts; the want of serious Consideration, which makes God's Word, and all His Works prove ineffectual. We can alledge no other Cause of what I just now said, that they make some part of their Duty, and the least part, serve for the whole. Of which they could not be Guilty, did they consider, either the
Na-

Nature of God, or the Nature of Sin, or the Nature of those Duties which they are willing to Perform; or indeed any thing else that belongs to Religion.

I have not room to enlarge upon all these, and therefore shall particularly confine my self to that which the Text principally relates unto, The Divine Judgments; which ought above all Things to awaken us to Consideration; without which they leave no deep Impression upon

100 *An Exhortation to*

us. Of the Necessity of this, the Wise Man admonishes us, in that grave Counsel which he gives, 8. *Eccles.* 14. *In the day of adversity consider.* Consider what you have done ; Consider what God would have you to do ; Consider the Reason why you should do it ; Consider your Danger if you do it not ; Yea, consider what it is that is wont to keep you from Consideration.

One thing I am sure is,
The Love of the Bodily
Life ;

Life ; the desire of Fleſhly Eaſe and Delights. Theſe are unwilling that a Man ſhould grow Serious. They are all ſpoiled if he become Conſiderate. They tempt him to throw away all Thoughts, that ſo he may enjoy himſelf more ſweetly, and not be diſturbed in his Pleaſures.

Let us beware therefore of theſe Enchantments. Let us take heed we be not lulled aſleep in the Lap of Senſual Enjoyments ; for fear our Ruin fall upon us,
E 5 when

when we are not aware of it.

Above all, in time of great Distress by any publick or private Calamity, we ought to shun Voluptuousness, as we do Shelves and Quick sands; which Men more especially dread in a Storm. Then it is most unseasonable to make our selves Merry, when we are in great Danger. For that's the way to throw off all Consideration; even then when to Consider is most necessary, and will
do

do us the greatest Service.
It is a sign Men are void of
all Sense, and have no
more Fear than the Brutes;
which Eat and Drink just
as they use to do, when
they see one of their Fel-
lows Slaughtered before
their Eyes. Read what the
Prophet *Isaiab* writes about
this matter, in 22. Chap. v.
12, 13, 14. *In that day did
the LORD God of hosts
call to weeping, and mourning,
to baldness and girding with
sackcloth. And behold joy and
gladness, slaying oxen, and
killing*

104 *An Exhortation to*

killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die.

And it was revealed in mine ears, by the LORD of hosts, surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die, saith the LORD God of hosts. Purged

from them? no, how was it possible, when they themselves opposed the means of their Cure? God called for Mourning; and they quite contrary, betook themselves to Merriment and Pleasure. They were like unto some Sick Persons, who at that very time, when they are under the Physicians hands, will not forbear their Intemperance or bad Diet, which was the cause of their Disease. Doth any Man expect his Medicines will

will work the Effect he desires, when he to whom they are Administred will not refrain from full Meals, or from his Mushrooms and unwholsome Diet? He may pray his Heart out, who begs Health of God, while he does nothing but disorder himself, even while he is confined to his Chamber for his Recovery. And just so unsuccessful will all those Supplications prove, which are made to God for the saving of our Souls, or of our Country from Ruin; while we continue to oppose his Divine Methods, from whom all Salvation comes.

For it is altogether like to a Man that calls for Quarter, and begs Mercy of his Enemy that hath him in his Power; though
at

at the same time he deals his Blows round about him as thick as ever, and shows no sign that he abates his Hostility. Such Supplications are perfectly ridiculous : They carry in themselves their own denial ; they forbid that which they ask, and undermine the very foundation of the Request.

If then we would not be numbred with those Stubborn Rebels, who gave the occasion of this Discourse, and after many Vials of God's Wrath poured on them, *repented not, to give him glory* : If you would not be like the old *Samaritans* whom *Amos* speaks of, nor hear those Sighs so often repeated of you, as they were of them, *Yet ye returned not unto me, saith the*

the LORD : Yet ye returned not unto me, &c. Do not rely upon your Prayers alone, or the most passionate Beseechings you can use, for Mercy from God ; but joyn therewith sober and considering Thoughts ; especially when He calls you to them in any kind of Trouble. *In the day of adversity consider.*

Consider among other things, what I have now represented to you. Consider the Causes of the hardness of Men's Hearts ; and then if you have any Fear of the Divine Majesty, and of His Judgments, how can you chuse but return to him ?

Think that it is God who calls upon you to Repent, by every Affliction that befalls you.

Think

Think that he bids you search and try your own Ways, and leave others to examine theirs.

Think that you are not so much concerned to persuade others to be of your Mind, as to persuade your self to be of God's.

Set your selves against Men's notorious Vices, more than against them.

Be not secure, nor flatter up your selves with vain Hopes.

Believe that the Prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD.

Do not imagine you should employ your time to move him; but to move your selves to change your Will.

Consider that He is always the same; and that it is we who must alter and turn, not He.
That

That He is ever an Enemy to the Bad , and a Friend to the Good ; and that nothing can alter this eternal Reason and Law. That we do but spend our Breath in vain, if we seek to incline him unto us , without more than an inclination unto him ; that is, without actual Amendment of our wicked Life.

In Conclusion , believe that the greatest Bane of all good Thoughts and Desires, is a Voluptuous Life. This extinguishes all the Sparks of Grace that are in Men's Souls : it choaks and stifles all Virtuous Motions : and therefore let us avoid it, as we would Everlasting Damnation.

Consider these things frequent-

quently; and consider withal how by taking this Course, you will Glorify God: For St. *John* here supposes, That *to repent, is to give him Glory.*

APPLICATION.

Would you not, before you leave this World, do some Honour unto Him who brought you hither? Repent then; alter the Course of your Life; for that is an effectual Acknowledgment of God, in all the Perfections belonging to His Divine Nature: which the Scripture means by *giving him glory.*

By this we humbly acknowledge the Authority he hath over us; and confess His Right to give us Laws, whereby we ought

the Clergy of Ely. 111

ought to be ruled and governed.

These Laws also we acknowledge to be Equal, Just, and Good; when forsaking all other ways, we return to their Obedience.

Whereby we acknowledge also His Wisdom; that we are in the Wrong, and He in the Right; that we have played the Fool, and followed after Lies; and He alone can make us Wise unto Salvation.

The Truth also of His Threatnings is acknowledged by Repentance, which gives Him the Glory of His Veracity in what He hath Denounced against Sinners.

And so it doth also Glorify His Power, which conquers Souls, and subdues Hearts, and
turns

112 *An Exhortation to*

turns about Men's obstinate Wills, and carries them Captive to the Obedience of Faith.

For Repentance is a yielding the Victory to God, who hath long strove with us. It is a throwing down our Arms, and professing our selves overcome by the force of His Conviction, by the Strength of His Truth, by the Mightiness of His Love, and by the Power of His Holy Spirit.

What need I speak of the Honour it doth to His Holiness? It being an open Declaration, That He cannot be in Love with Sin; nor by any means be Reconciled to it, though His Love be ever so great unto us.

His Unchangeableness is likewise hereby acknowledged:
That

the Clergy of Ely. 113

That we must Turn and become like unto Him ; but He cannot Turn and become like unto us.

I omit the rest, and only put you in mind how hereby we acknowledge, That He is the Fountain of true Bliss: That the Felicity of our Souls lies in His Favour and Love: That after we have tired our selves with a fond long pursuit of Happiness in other things, we can find no rest to our Souls but in Him alone; whose Will is the Rule of Righteousness: Whose Nature it is to be Happy.

We flee therefore to Him by Repentance, as the only Comfort of reasonable Beings; as the Rest and Repose of Human Souls; as the solid and immortal Joy of our Minds; in Conjunction

114 *An Exhortation to*

junction with whom we cannot but be Happy ; and in Separation from whom, we must needs be inconceivably Miserable.

If all these be too much to Remember, keep in Mind only the First and the Last of them ; and you will be sufficiently satisfied of the Glory you give to God by Repentance. For it is an acknowledgment of Him to be both our Sovereign Lord, and our Sovereign Good ; our Ruler, and our Rewarder ; as having Supreme Authority, and Supreme Felicity : Or in the Apostle's Language, *The blessed and one Potentate, who only hath immortality.*

We disclaim hereby all other Governors ; and we protest we have no other Good. We resign

the Clergy of Ely. 115

sign our selves to His Holy Will and Pleasure ; and profess that our highest Pleasure and Contentment is in pleasing Him ; in Loving Him ; and hoping He will be well pleased with us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Who hath told us, That *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* This he repeats twice in the same place, 15. *Luk. 7, 10.* Which cannot but suggest to our Thoughts, what an exceeding great Joy there would be in the Presence of God, if a whole Nation did Repent, or if the generality of Men among us did grow better.

This God expects should be the fruit of his Blessed Gospel, which we have long enjoy'd ; and the fruit of his many severe
Chastise-

116 *An Exhortation to*

Chastisements, which he hath inflicted on us for our Sins. Upon which if we did seriously and frequently reflect, and consider such things as I have laid before you in this Discourse ; instead of such Complaints as *Amos* and *St. John* make, we might say with the Prophet *Ezekiel*, 18. 27, 28.

When the wicked turneth from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he CONSIDERETH and turneth away from his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, and not die. Amen.

20 MA 59

F I N I S.

